

QA-17962

BECKER DRIVER TRAINING FACILITY
Route 5 Box 10-F, Albert Lea, Minn. 56007
Telephone: 507-373-8513

FHWA-97-2199-17
July 19, 1993

Docket # MC-93-12
Comments: Industry Training Standards,
Truck Driver Training
Federal Highway Administration
400 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: Docket # MC-93-12
Truck Driver Training Schools
and Government Publications
on such

Gentlemen:

Enclosed is a photostatic copy of our letter to the Federal Trade Commission, & a publication put out for consumers, by the Federal Trade Commission. The publication is entitled, "Facts for Consumers- Truck Driving Schools". Since the Federal Highway Administration is taking comments on standards for driver training, it should also RECEIVE COMMENTS ON THE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS DEALING WITH SCHOOLS.

The government, (in it's publication), strongly endorses the Professional Truck Driving Institute of America, and National Association of Trade and Technical Schools, as reliable sources of driver training schools. Our letter addressed to the Federal Trade Commission, requests a response from their department. Also attached is a letter from Great West Casualty Company, South Sioux City, Nebr.

Sincerely

Joseph Becker
Joseph Becker
Becker Driver Training

Enclosure :
JAB/cmb

FHWA DOCKET MC-93-12-15
PAGE 1 OF 9

BECKER DRIVER TRAINING FACILITY
Route 5 Box IO-F, Albert Lea, MN 56007
Telephone: 507-373-8513

July 16, 1993

Federal Trade Commission
6th & Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20580

RE: "Facts For **Consumers-**
Truck-Driving Schools"
Federal Highway Adminis-
tration - "Industry Training
Standards" Docket # MC-93-12

Dear Sir:

As you are probably aware, the Federal Highway Administration is in the process of taking **comments** on industry training standards, for truck driver training, docket # MC-93-12. Our **training school**, has already **submitted it's comments**, and felt that the Federal Trade **Commission** should receive (like) **comments**, since you put out a publication for consumers. **Example:** In July 1990, you put out a publication entitled, "Facts for Consumers, Truck-Driving Schools".

The Federal Trade Commission is a strong supporter of the Professional Truck Driving Institute of America, and National Association of Trade and Technical Schools, as a source of reliable training schools. We are a heavy-duty truck driver training school, (licensed by the Department of Public Safety); that has contacted many Senators, and Representatives, including our own state representatives, The Department of Education, and various accrediting agencies, concerning truck driver training programs, accreditation problems, and the ineffectiveness of programs that offer too few **"hands on"** actual training hours. Many sources of truck driver training programs, such as listed in your publication, vocational schools, **community** colleges, technical colleges, included among these, The Professional Truck Driver Institute of America, do NOT offer **ENOUGH** "Hands ON" training.

One of the reasons the educational school system is not equipped to teach our unique course, is the systems inability to incorporate the "Hands **On**" training needed. The school systems, can not provide the body building stamina that must be conditioned into **students**. This body building stamina, is equated to jet lag in travelers. Our school trains **it's** students under direct instructor supervision to a 32 state area, during the last 400 hours, of our 1200 hour course. These students are indoctrinated by doing every phase of the operation, and meet situations/circumstances, that a professional driver will encounter.

The school systems, can not teach the proper handling of freight, the various types of **commodities**, or the procedures involved. Proper **documentation** is essential to prevent claims levied against the student's (prospective) employer's carrier, for lost product; due to improperly signed delivery receipts. This can **amount** to a substantial financial loss. One reason, employers DEMAND 3 years work experience. The general public relies on publications, such as yours, to help them become informed, before making a major decision, such as updating skills, or career planning.

The school systems can not show students the procedures, for the proper stacking of cargo, and weight distribution, to prevent overweight fines, or truck tip-over: due to **"cargo shift"**. The school systems do not provide proper telephone **commu-**
nications procedures, to prevent fines against (prospective) employer carriers, for late deliveries, or the **communications/safety** procedures, to prevent damage to equipment/cargo. Nor are the school systems equipped to teach the techniques needed to handle a tractor-trailer on ALL TYPES of roadways. Students in familiar surroundings, are NOT properly prepared to handle the stress related factors of being in **various** cities across the nation. The education system simply has not dealt

FWHA DOCKET MC-93-12-15
PAGE 2 OF 9

with the transportation industry, and it does not know the pitfalls, or the industry requirements/standards in order to adequately prepare, and teach the industry techniques.

The success of our school, depends largely from the fact that our instructors have done the maintenance, practical; and have the experience of all facets of the industry, from mechanical, dispatching driving, teaching, etc. through our ongoing operation as a trucking company. The separate company, Becker HI-Way Frate, began **training** it's own employees, when skilled drivers could not be found to meet the demand for positions available. It is our belief that any school, who could use their graduated students, in a real world situation: would drastically alter their present training programs; the schools would see the shortcanings in their instruction.

Our **separate** driver training school, has been. through the intense requirements of the Department of Public Safety. The standards set by this government department (for the State of Minnesota), are extremely stringent, and a CREDIT to promoting national, as well as state highway safety. Our school was required to have it's programs approved BEFORE those programs could be taught. Our instructors were approved by the **commissioner**, BEFORE licensure, with reviews on a yearly basis, (all before renewal) of those licenses. In addition, the school has to be approved, and is reviewed yearly.

The State of Minnesota, Department of Public Safety, has an excellent standard of licensing. It far surpasses the Department of Education's own standards, pertaining to the truck driver training courses. Our school teaches a 6 month, 1200 hour course, which is 75% Hands On training. This enables the beginner to become a highly skilled long distance truck driver. For drivers, (with some previous experience), written, and hands on- tests are given. This evaluation process - credits the passing grades, and our training, concentrates on any needed areas. Which **brings** the focus to the National Private Truck Council, and National Association of Trade and Technical Schools.

In the 102nd Congress Senate Report # 102-58, entitled, "Abuses in Federal Student Aid Programs", accrediting agencies were under investigation by the United State Senate. **NATTS**, was among the seven. The accrediting agencies charge schools huge amounts **of** money, under the guise of passing the "standards of quality education". In reality, according to the report, increases in revenue for these independent accrediting agencies, ranged **from** a low of 41% to a high of 590% for membership dues. One reason educational costs have skyrocketed. The insurance of quality education has become a price tag. A school must be accredited by an accrediting **agency**, for **it's** students to be able to participate in the Federal Title IV programs, (student financial aid). Students without funding, can't afford to attend school. These students are ineligible for low interest educational loans; without financial aid, student's can't update skills, or learn a trade. The seven independent accrediting bodies, receive huge sums of money from the very schools, that they are to regulate. One has to wonder if **some** schools are not accredited partly because of monetary gain.

The National Private Truck Council, has been trying to incorporate an accrediting standard of **it's** own. The programs and training offered, do not equal our own programs. We have built our school, and the reputation, **from** the experiences of building our own truck line. By using our own student drivers; whose performance, we found: far surpassed those **from** any surrounding school.

The "hands **on**" training received under actual circumstances encountered is the turning point, between inadequate, or professional.

The proof we offer, is the incessant demands for our drivers from the **competition** in our field of truck transportation. The rank demand, and sometimes

unjust recruiting methods of some other carriers, have diminished our desire to teach without payment. Yet, **throughout**, we have managed small classes, and a total fee of only \$ 6200.00 for our longest (6 month) ^{course} of 1200 hours, which is 75% "hands on". **Compare** this to the 3 week long **course**, \$ 2500.00 fee charged, by U.S. Truck Driving School; see (July 1993, Heavy Duty Trucking, article, "Driver Training - Joining Forces").

Our programs were developed by the actual doing of the duties required. The programs weren't developed by personnel who **NEVER** did mechanical work, never cared for **temperature** sensitive cargo, never handled hazardous cargo. Our personnel developed the programs, from **ACTUAL** shipments, and involvements with the shipping public, not from reading requirements, from a study manual. There is clearly a difference. Most **seem** to encourage less hours, and less hands on training to facilitate in keeping costs down. This practice of teaching, leads to under trained personnel operating, for example, a 80,000 pound, .65 foot long vehicle in our cities, and on our nations highways. After a few hours of instruction, most students can pass the **commercial** driver license, with an unloaded trailer, hooked to a semi tractor, in a controlled circumstance, such as that of a road test. That same individual in a job situation near the end of an exhaustive trip in perhaps a crowded Washington, D.C. traffic setting, driving on ice/snow covered roadway is another.

In addition to my experience in the transportation field, I have had the pleasure to be associated very closely in the educational field. I have drawn on my mechanical aptitude to help evaluate post-secondary schools **in** the State of Minnesota.

Past Chairman of the Board of diesel mechanics - for the Albert Lea Technical College

Member of the Albert Lea Area Quality Control Council

Present Advisory Board (Albert **Lea/Mankato** Technical College) member past 15 years

Present and Past Program **Evaluator**, in the diesel mechanics course, for the State of Minnesota, in post-secondary education

ASE - Certificate for Freon Recovery & Recycling

License issued by the Minnesota State Highway Patrol, as a vehicle safety inspector, number 90111-I

Department of Education truck driver instructor license, in **post**-secondary education

Minnesota **Department** of Public Safety truck driver instructor license

C.R. special certificate of **completion** for installation, maintenance, & trouble detecting of air brakes, air dryers, and shaft seals.

The Department of Labor's study shows 47% of new jobs created in the transportation industry, will be in truck driving. **The** public, educators, trucking concerns, etc. should demand reform in our educational processes. Students can not continue to pay escalating tuition costs, with less training being delivered.

Again, may I reiterate, after a few hours of instruction, most students can pass the driving test, in a **CONTROLLED** circumstance. **UNLESS** minimum programs with "HANDS **ON**" training, under direct guidance of a veteran 10 year licensed instructor are established, unskilled heavy duty operators will continue to operate on the highways. This statement should NOT be misconstrued by the assumption that **EVERY** veteran driver can be, or is of instructor constitution. The qualities of a good driver becoming an instructor, takes training in addition to time.

I feel that Industry Standards of Excellence are not really very well taught in most schools. My observations is that far too many people in high positions, simply DO NOT possess the actual experience necessary to set good truck driver training standards. Any person who is capable of passing the **commercial** drivers license is a very poor comparison to the knowledge, and skill required by a professional over-the-road driver.

I have witnessed good dedicated experienced fleet driver, who lacked the ability to communicate proper procedure to the student. The above reason, plus the shortage of "hands **on**" training hours of most programs leave many student drivers; with a very serious safety deficiency. In closing, we simply must put an end to training programs that are built by inexperienced people. **The** same type programs being taught by instructors, who very well LACK actual years of necessary experience themselves.

A former student, (of 30 years ago), said, "**Every** day is school day". He was very correct in making this statement, as I myself, after 40 years, am still in the process of learning something new day after day.

Your article is correct in "bashing", sane of the private truck driving schools for inadequate training methods. **Look** into the **community** college, and vocational school programs, that you seem to favor in your article. If your article was not biased, you would note many training flaws in their programs as well. This is not to condemn the sincerity, or dedication of these programs. The problems exist mainly because of actual lack of real world knowledge by the people who build and/or administer the programs.

I would appreciate your response to this letter.

Sincerely;



Joseph Becker
Director
Becker Driver Training Facility

Enclosure
JAB/cmb

FHWA DOCKET MC-93-12-15
PAGE 5 OF 9



1100 W 29TH STREET • P O BOX 277 • SOUTH SIOUX CITY NE 68776 • 402-494-2411

| | | |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| Post-It™ brand fax transmittal memo 7671 | | # of pages • 1 |
| To | From | |
| JOE BECKER | JOHN FORSYTHE | |
| Co | Co | |
| BECKER HIGHWAY FRONT | GWCC | |
| Dept. | Phone # | |
| FIRST BANK - SUE | 402-494-2411 | |
| Fax # | Fax # | |
| 507-373-4719 | | |

Date: March 1, 1993

Subject: Becker Driver Training

To: Whom it May Concern

I have been associated with Joe Becker for the last three years. I've experienced many of the programs that he has implemented into the Becker Driver Training Program. Without hesitation, this is a **premiere** driver training program,

I am a Safety and Loss Prevention **Representative** for Great West Casualty and have the opportunity to view many driver training programs. Most programs are six to eight weeks in length and teach the student only the **basics**. The Becker Driver Training Program is six **months** in length and **not** only teaches the basics but also finishes the driver in all phases of the trucking **industry**.

The safety record of his program is accident free. Since I have been associated with Joe, no driver in his program has had a chargeable accident. Joe has many years in the industry and has **many** talents to pass along to his students.

The industry needs solid programs such as the Becker Driver Training Program. We **need good qualified** drivers operating the tractors and trailers using the nations highway and not just numbers as some of the other training **programs** provide. Qualified drivers that come from the Becker Driver Training Program will help **keep** our nations highway safe.

Sincerely,

John G. Forsythe
Safety and Loss Prevention Representative

FHWA DOCKET MC-93-12-15
PAGE 6 OF 9

FACTS for consumers

from the Federal Trade Commission

July 1990

Truck-Driving Schools

When you see recruitment ads for truck-driving schools, you should know that advertising claims made by some schools may not be true. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has brought charges against several truck-driving schools for false advertising.

This fact sheet describes what deceptive practices the FTC has found, suggests questions to ask when talking to a sales agent or visiting a truck-driving school, mentions alternatives to private truck-driver training, and recommends precautions to take before applying.

Common Deceptive Practices

The FTC has investigated complaints and ordered some private truck-driving schools to correct the way they represent training and employment opportunities in their ads. For example:

Some schools misrepresented the thoroughness of the job training.

The FTC found that some courses did not provide enough hours of road instruction or driving experience to qualify students for a truck-driving job.

Some schools failed to tell students about cancellation and refund policies or failed to make refunds in keeping with their policies.

Many students who paid substantially for a course, sometimes more than \$2,000, received no tuition refund when they dropped out of training.

Some schools misrepresented chances of future employment in the industry.

These schools misled students into believing there was a demand for their graduates as well-trained truck drivers -- that then would be jobs when they completed the course. But most schools provided only basic training and could not assure jobs, not offer employment.

Some schools misrepresented their business connections with the industry.

They claimed to have special ties with trucking companies when, in fact, they did not.

Questions to Ask School Representatives

After answering an ad for a truck-driving school, you may be invited to see a school representative, a sales agent, or an instructor. Use the school's advertising claims as the basis for your questions and call others to verify the information. Below are six claims frequently made by truck-driving school representatives.

"Fast training -- only four weeks."

Ask the school's representative how much on-the-road training you get in the course and if that amount of time meets state licensing requirements. Then call the state trucking authority where you want to be licensed and ask if the state has any basic requirements. Compare whether the course meets the licensing requirements of the state. Often the first half of the training course consists of a home-study program of reading materials

and "tests" that cost hundreds of dollars. Only the last half of the course -- 10 days to 2 weeks -- is the "hands-on" or "resident training." That part of the course may be too short and inadequate to qualify a student for an entry-level job as a truck driver.

"No previous driving experience necessary."

Ask the school's representative how many of their former students go directly from training school to truck-driving jobs. Then call local people in the trucking industry to find out their hiring requirements for newly-trained drivers. Many times, newcomers start out as dockworkers and freight loaders until a driver position opens up in a company,

"Earn high wages."

Ask the school's representative about starting salaries for newly-trained truck drivers the school has helped place. You can verify these entry-level salaries by calling your state trucking association or a local trucking business.

"Receive placement assistance."

Ask the school's representative how their job placement works. Ask where the school has placed drivers after training. Sometimes "placement services" amount to little more than providing you with clippings from newspaper "Help Wanted" ads.

"Financial Assistance Available."

Ask the school's representative for a written list of all the fees and costs. If you need financial assistance, find out what costs will be covered by your loan and whether refunds are available if you cancel.

"Anyone Can Qualify."

Ask the representative what qualifications are needed to become a truck driver. Requirements may vary according to the type of truck and the nature of the company's business. You may have to be at least 18 years of age and, under most state laws, have a chauffeur's license. You can call your state motor vehicle department to find out what is required to get this license. You also can consult the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, published by the U.S. Department of Labor, found in any library. The handbook provides current information about industry employment trends, training requirements, and qualifications necessary to enter any industry, including truck-driving.

State-Supported Truck-Driver Training

As an alternative to a relatively expensive truck-driving school, you may be able to attend truck-driving courses offered through tax-supported community colleges, technical institutes, or vocational schools in your state. These schools also can qualify you for job opportunities in the trucking industry. To find the names of such schools, contact a state educational authority, a state trucking association, local trucking companies, or nationally recognized accrediting organization, such as the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS). You can write to NATTS at 2251 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007, or pho" (202) 333-1021.

Some Suggestions

Before signing up for truck-driver training, ask several schools for written information about their programs. This will help you choose the best school for you and save both time and money in the long run. The following suggestions also might be helpful.

- Talk to the management of local trucking firms about the school you are interested in attending. *Find out if they hire graduates from that school.*
- Ask counselors at your high school, community college, vocational school, or technical institute if your state offers training for truck drivers.
- Inquire whether a truck-driving school is accredited by your state's accrediting or licensing board before you apply. Each state is different, so call your state government's general information operator, who can direct you to the state agency with that information.
- Check with the Professional Truck Driving Institute of America (PTDIA) to see if the truck-driving course meets the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) voluntary standards. Not all truck-driving courses have volunteered to be evaluated by PTDIA. But if a course has undergone evaluation, PTDIA can tell you if it meets, exceeds, or does not meet DOT's standards. You can contact PTDIA at 8788 Elk Grove Boulevard, Suite M, Elk Grove, California 95624 (916) 686-5146.
- Read any school's application carefully before you sign it. Understand your rights and responsibilities under the contract. *Make sure all promises are in writing.*
- Know the tuition costs and your cancellation and refund rights in case you do not finish the training.

- Get a loan, if you need it for tuition, through a reliable source and understand the terms. Financial aid may be available to you through the U.S. Department of Education. The Department of Education can provide you with information about Federal student financial-aid programs and help you complete a financial-aid application. Their toll-free number is (800) 333-INFO.
- Be wary of truck-driving schools that claim immediate employment upon graduation.
- Contact your local or state consumer protection office and Better Business Bureau to learn if any complaints have been made against the school you are considering;

FTC Headquarters

6th & Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20580
(202) 326-2222

FTC Regional Offices

1718 Peachtree Street, N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30367
(404) 347-4836

10 Causeway Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02222
(617) 565-7240

~~Federal Trade Commission~~
55 East Monroe Street
Chicago, Illinois 60603
(312) 353-4423

668 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
(216) 522-4210

To Report Problems

If you enroll in a truck-driving course and a problem occurs that you cannot resolve with the school, send a letter describing your problem to your local or state consumer protection office. Send a copy of your letter to the Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580. Although the FTC cannot represent you directly in a dispute with a company, it can act if there is evidence of 3 pattern of deceptive or unfair sales practices.

If you borrowed Federal funds to pay for truck-driver training, you can also call the Department of Education to report your problem. The toll-free number is: (800) MIS-USED, or in Washington, D.C., call 755-2770.

100 N. Central Expressway
Dallas, Texas 75201
(214) 767-5501

1405 Curtis Street
Denver, Colorado 80202
(303) 844-2271

1100 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90024
(213) 209-7890

26 Federal Plaza
New York, New York 10278
(212) 264-1207

901 Market Street
San Francisco, California 94103
(415) 995-5220

915 Second Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98174
(206) 442-4655